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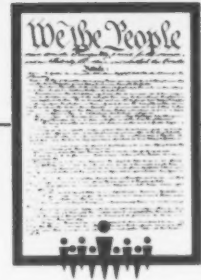
ABSTRACT

The recommendations put forth in this document were developed at a symposium in which policy and decision makers from education, government, publishing, legal, judicial, and philanthropic organizations gathered to address the following three questions: (1) Is the study of the Constitution and Bill of Rights critical to meeting the nation's education goals, especially in preparing young people for responsible citizenship? (2) Are the Constitution and Bill of Rights being taught effectively in elementary and secondary schools? and (3) How can it be ensured that the study of the Constitution and Bill of Rights is included as a high priority among the nation's education goals, especially in preparing young people for responsible citizenship? The recommendations in the report are organized into two main parts: (1) curriculum and instruction; and (2) policy. Part 1 includes sections on education for citizenship; standards for excellence and equity; resources; and teacher education. Part 2 has been divided into recommendations targeted primarily for (1) state and local; and (2) national levels. Each section is prefaced by an introduction containing points that provide background and a context for the subsequent recommendations. (DB)

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TO OURSELVES

AND OUR POSTERITY



RECOMMENDATIONS

FROM

THE LEON JAWORSKI SYMPOSIUM

On Teaching About the
Constitution and Bill of Rights
in the 21st Century

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BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

Jaworski Symposium. "To Ourselves and Our Posterity: The Leon Jaworski Symposium on Teaching About the Constitution and Bill of Rights in the 21st Century" was conducted at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC on September 11-13, 1991. It was cosponsored by the American Bar Association Special Committee on Youth Education for Citizenship (ABA/YEFC) and the Smithsonian Institution Office of Elementary and Secondary Education. The symposium brought together key policy and decision makers from education, government, publishing, legal, judicial, and philanthropic organizations. The goal was to develop recommendations to guide schools' efforts to educate elementary and secondary school students about the Constitution and Bill of Rights in the 21st century. Participants represented national and other organizations and agencies with demonstrated commitments to improving instruction about the Constitution and Bill of Rights in the nation's schools.

Development of Recommendations. Symposium participants actively engaged in panel hearings and small group working sessions to address the following three questions:

- (1) Is study of the Constitution and Bill of Rights critical to meeting the nation's education goals, especially in preparing young people for responsible citizenship?
- (2) Is the Constitution and Bill of Rights being taught effectively in elementary and secondary schools?
- (3) How can we ensure that the study of the Constitution and Bill of Rights is included as a high priority among the nation's education goals, especially in preparing young people for responsible citizenship?

At the conclusion of the conference, draft recommendations were prepared and disseminated to participants for their reaction, comments and suggestions. The recommendations included in this report are the end result of their collective efforts. They do not represent the official policies of the organizations whose representatives participated in the symposium.

Organization of Recommendations in Report. The recommendations in this report have been organized into two main parts: (1) Curriculum and Instruction; and (2) Policy.

Part One includes sections on (a) Education for Citizenship; (b) Standards for Excellence and Equity; (c) Resources; and (d) Teacher Education.

Part Two has been divided into recommendations targeted primarily to (a) State and Local; and (b) National, levels.

Each section is prefaced by introductory points, which provide background and context for the subsequent recommendations.

Publication of Results. A publication including the final Jaworski Symposium recommendations and background papers prepared by conference presenters will be available in early 1992 from the ABA/YEFC.

PART ONE: CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

EDUCATION FOR CITIZENSHIP

Introduction

Americans are, first and foremost, a constitutional people. The constitutional implication of this proposition is that the perpetuation of the American constitutional system (federal and state constitutions, laws, judicial system, etc.) depends on the informed participation of the citizenry; the educational implication is that civic participation depends on a continuing education in citizenship with the Constitution and Bill of Rights at its core.

Constitution-focused citizenship education provides an essential, proper means of maintaining the needed social balance between respect for diversity and deepening of common bonds.

By the year 2000 six million new legal immigrants will enter the United States. This will have profound consequences for all of American society. For this reason, it will be all the more imperative that schools revitalize their efforts to educate young people for citizenship education by fostering understanding of fundamental constitutional principles and values (e.g., respect for tolerance, appreciation for diversity, establishment of consensus, understanding of constitutional decision-making processes).

RECOMMENDATION 1: Education for effective and responsible citizenship, of which constitutional studies is an essential component, should be placed among the foremost goals for the nation's elementary and secondary schools, thus confirming their historic mission in helping to educate a self-governing people. In a constitutional democracy, national educational goals cannot be established solely in accordance with "instrumental" priorities. Such priorities would reduce the value and purpose of education to providing technical skills or training. The fundamental purpose of citizenship education is to promote civic virtue, competence, and knowledge among all citizens.

RECOMMENDATION 2: Every student should have an understanding of the fundamental principles of the Constitution and Bill of Rights; should receive regular and systematic instruction about the Constitution and Bill of Rights in elementary and secondary schools; and should participate in classroom instruction that results in knowledge, understanding, skills, and attitudes needed for informed and committed citizenship.

RECOMMENDATION 3: Study of the Constitution and Bill of Rights should be an essential part of the elementary and secondary school curriculum--as essential as English, math, and science.

STANDARDS FOR EXCELLENCE AND EQUITY

Introduction

One aspect of the current school reform movement is a discernible trend to define and assign accountability for students' performance as a means to improve academic achievement. This entails establishing standards and measurable outcomes for performance, and enhancing the weight and impact given to

assessments and tests (including, for example, the National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP) results--see Recommendation 32 below). The greater the emphasis on assessment, the more likely it becomes that tested and "testable" subject-matter will determine applicable areas of curriculum and instruction.

For these reasons, it is imperative that constitutional studies advocates address relevant issues regarding standards for this area of instruction.

RECOMMENDATION 4: Voluntary national standards for excellence in precollegiate instruction about the Constitution and Bill of Rights should be promoted.

RECOMMENDATION 5: Frameworks should be developed to include subject-matter priorities in instruction about the Constitution and Bill of Rights. In developing these frameworks, the following criteria and emphases should be considered:

(a) study of constitutional subjects across subject-matter areas, especially in history, government/civics and other social studies, and grade levels, should be encouraged;

(b) knowledge of constitutional history (origins and development), while essential, is not sufficient. Effective constitutional understanding also requires conceptual and contemporary perspectives which encourage critical thought and action.

(c) opportunities for active learning with "laboratory" experience (outside the classroom) which reinforce the link between the subject-matter knowledge, principles and values of constitutional education with relevant practices and applications should be encouraged;

(d) grade-appropriate concepts, topics and activities related to the Constitution and Bill of Rights can and should be taught throughout the elementary and secondary curriculum, from the earliest grades on;

(e) teaching about constitutional principles, values and ideals should be presented within the context of evolving social and political realities;

(f) different points of view about constitutional issues should be emphasized;

(g) topics and issues should be explored within the broader framework of study of constitutionalism and rights; and

(h) comparisons between and among constitutions and governments should be developed.

RECOMMENDATION 6: Instructional approaches to study of the Constitution and Bill of Rights should build on students' existing knowledge and understanding from grade to grade and should incorporate increasingly challenging analytic tasks.

RECOMMENDATION 7: Constitutional education initiatives should be expanded to more effectively include programs for teachers of all youth (e.g., returning dropouts, GED students, ESL students, children of migrants and new immigrants).

RESOURCES

Introduction

Textbooks are typically long on superficial surveys of the subject and short on detailed treatments of key ideas, issues and events. They are "encyclopedic" in that they present numerous subjects in fragmented fashion. Supplemental instructional materials are the surest remedy for the shortcomings of textbooks.

The bicentennial period has been a time of extraordinary production of curriculum materials about every facet of the Constitution and Bill of Rights in our history and contemporary society.

Commercial textbooks have undergone some creditable changes as a result of the bicentennial. In 1985 few civics and government textbooks treated the constitutional period in any depth--none of the books effectively discussed the Constitution as the framework for actions in government, or as the source of principles that guide policymaking. A number of new editions of textbooks include the text of the Constitution as an integral part of early chapters on government and do so in an engaging manner.

Educational partnerships (e.g., involving teachers, scholars, attorneys, community leaders, the media, philanthropic organizations and government) have been established at all levels--from national coalitions of organizations to individuals serving as resources in classrooms and the community--to support high-quality constitutional studies.

RECOMMENDATION 8: Appropriate organizations and agencies should be identified as sources of information and resource materials for teaching the Constitution and Bill of Rights, including resources developed during the bicentennial period.

RECOMMENDATION 9: An advisory board, representing broad, diverse perspectives, should be established to identify and evaluate diverse instructional materials from a variety of sources.

RECOMMENDATION 10: Scholars from relevant disciplines (e.g., history, political science, law) should become even more actively involved in the development of instructional materials on the Constitution and Bill of Rights.

RECOMMENDATION 11: Continued efforts to disseminate high-quality supplemental instructional materials, emphasizing intellectually active learning approaches, and to educate teachers to make effective use of them, must remain a high priority.

RECOMMENDATION 12: To increase the effectiveness of instructional materials being developed, more research studies are needed to collect detailed information about what interests and motivates young people in regard to government and law, how they gain information, form perceptions, and develop attitudes toward their own and other political cultures.

RECOMMENDATION 13: Instructional materials should be developed which emphasize the importance of comparative constitutional approaches for broadening study of the Constitution and Bill of Rights within an international context.

TEACHER EDUCATION

Introduction

While there have been perceptible improvements in curriculum and instruction, much more remains to be accomplished to achieve high-quality education about the Constitution and Bill of Rights in all of America's elementary and secondary schools. The dissemination of quality resources and effective training in their use has been far too limited in impact upon students' understanding of the Constitution and Bill of Rights.

Effective teaching requires provision of a variety of materials, staff development and library support.

Public and private foundations and agencies have funded numerous institutes and workshops for teachers to help them make effective use of constitutional educational resources. The teaching materials and methods in these programs have emphasized intellectually active learning approaches.

Many teachers rely extensively on standard textbooks and are reluctant, or feel constrained, to make use of active learning approaches and supplemental materials. Hence, high-quality materials developed during the bicentennial period have been largely underused in schools, because many teachers either have not learned how to use them effectively or are not aware of them.

RECOMMENDATION 14: Every teacher should have an understanding of the fundamental principles of the Constitution and Bill of Rights and should know how the Constitution and the Bill of Rights apply to his or her teaching.

RECOMMENDATION 15: Teaching prospective teachers about the Constitution and Bill of Rights should be a top priority of teacher education efforts. Current efforts have focused more on "inservice" (i.e., continuing), rather than "preservice", education.

RECOMMENDATION 16: Every prospective elementary and secondary teacher in the United States, not just those in the social studies, should be required to have training in citizenship education, with a special emphasis on the Constitution and Bill of Rights, in their preservice program.

RECOMMENDATION 17: Every social studies teacher in the United States should be required to have formal, rigorous instruction about the Constitution and Bill of Rights as part of their preservice preparation.

RECOMMENDATION 18: The extensive inservice teacher education program efforts initiated during the bicentennial period should be continued and new ones developed. Constitution and Bill of Rights study is essential to effective citizenship education.

RECOMMENDATION 19: Relevant college and university faculty (e.g., history, political science, law) should become even more actively involved in educating elementary and secondary school teachers about the Constitution and Bill of Rights.

RECOMMENDATION 20: Teacher education program initiatives should be developed which emphasize the importance of comparative constitutional approaches for broadening study of the Constitution and Bill of Rights within an international context.

RECOMMENDATION 21: Initiatives should be established for teachers to improve their capacity to monitor public policy. This will help them teach their students to better understand gaps between the realities and the ideals of government and politics in the United States.

PART TWO: POLICY

Introduction

Study of the Constitution and Bill of Rights is critical to meeting the nation's education goals. It is essential to fostering the knowledge, understanding, attitudes, and skills which help prepare young people for effective and responsible citizenship.

Schools have historically been entrusted with the critical responsibility to provide a common civic education. No other agency in our society can serve this function.

A number of public and private agencies have supported (financially and otherwise) constitutional studies initiatives in elementary and secondary schools. Supporters of bicentennial education programs have included the National Bicentennial Commission, U.S. Department of Education, National Endowment for the Humanities, and other federal government agencies; state bicentennial commissions, education agencies, and humanities councils; and numerous private foundations and corporations.

Even some of the public and private agencies which have supported constitutional education initiatives may not remain committed to ongoing support, as funding priorities shift. In contrast, federal and other funding for ongoing programs in science and mathematics greatly exceeds that for constitutional studies and other citizenship education efforts.

None of our constitutional freedoms is inherently self-perpetuating. For this reason, business, labor, and civic leaders, as well as the media, bear a special responsibility to help promote the critical importance of constitutional studies in the nation's elementary and secondary schools.

STATE AND LOCAL

RECOMMENDATION 22: Broad-based, nonpartisan coalitions should be established at state and local levels to promote study of the Constitution and Bill of Rights. The mission of these coalitions should be to support continued improvements in instructional practice and take appropriate action steps to affect education policy.

RECOMMENDATION 23: At the state level, policymakers should select history, government, civics and other social studies textbooks which include effective study of the Constitution and Bill of Rights as an essential criterion when making statewide adoption decisions.

RECOMMENDATION 24: At the local level, school boards and curriculum development committees should be encouraged to recognize, and address through school programs, the importance of effective study of the Constitution and Bill of Rights.

NATIONAL

RECOMMENDATION 25: Constitutional studies-centered citizenship education should be among the nation's highest educational priorities for the 21st century.

RECOMMENDATION 26: The commitment of public and private agencies to high-quality constitutional education in elementary and secondary schools must continue beyond the bicentennial period. If not, there is the risk of continued underuse, perhaps even the loss, of enormous investment of educational resources.

RECOMMENDATION 27: The importance of funding and policy initiatives to support teaching about the Constitution and Bill of Rights in elementary and secondary schools should be promoted through a broad range of national print and electronic media.

RECOMMENDATION 28: Business, labor and community leaders must be informed of the critical importance of teaching about the Constitution and Bill of Rights in educating young people for responsible and effective citizenship in a democratic society, and challenged to support educational efforts in this area.

RECOMMENDATION 29: Reports should be issued periodically which assess the status of constitutional studies in elementary and secondary schools in the United States.

RECOMMENDATION 30: Policymakers and the public should be encouraged to support educational programs focused on future commemorative observances of constitutionally significant events.

RECOMMENDATION 31: Policymakers and funders should be encouraged to make ongoing commitments at national, state and local levels to ensure effective teaching about the Constitution and Bill of Rights.

RECOMMENDATION 32: Revised National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP) tests--the nation's "report cards"-- and other assessments should include measures and indicators which emphasize students' subject-matter knowledge of the Constitution and Bill of Rights, and the principles and values vital to effective citizenship education upon which they are based.

RECOMMENDATION 33: Instruction about the Constitution and Bill of Rights should be included among the subject-matter priorities of the governors' teacher academies proposed under federal legislation (America 2000 Excellence in Education Act). To effectively address this priority, in addition to History, a separate academy should be established for Civics/Government.

RECOMMENDATION 34: Greater understanding of the importance of constitutional education should be promoted among administrators in elementary and secondary schools (especially superintendents and assistant superintendents for instruction) and colleges and universities (especially deans and provosts) and through various targeted initiatives.

RECOMMENDATION 35: Effective ways and means should be sought to remind the general public, including the business community, that schools have a fundamental responsibility to educate young people for citizenship, not simply to train productive workers.

RECOMMENDATION 36: Champions in public life should be recruited to serve as advocates for the importance of constitutional studies in educating young people for effective and responsible citizenship in our constitutional democracy.

RECOMMENDATION 37: An annual recognition program for exemplary teachers of the Constitution and Bill of Rights should be created to publicly promote the importance of this subject for citizenship education.

RECOMMENDATION 38: A national coalition should be formed to promote and support improved constitutional studies in the nation's elementary and secondary schools. The American Bar Association Special Committee on Youth Education for Citizenship (ABA/YEFC) will take a leadership role in organizing this coalition.

The views expressed herein have not been approved by the House of Delegates or the Board of Governors of the American Bar Association and, accordingly, should not be construed as representing the policy of the American Bar Association.

Since 1971, the American Bar Association Special Committee on Youth Education for Citizenship has promoted and supported law-related education programs nationwide that prepare elementary and secondary students for effective and responsible citizenship.

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